

Holder of Secrets

by Julian Amsel

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Summary: A fic about secrets, trust and love... from Joe's POV, and written from personal experience.

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> <meta name="Author"> Holder of Secrets Author's Notes: Okay, this is a weird one. VERY weird. Oh, and did I mention it's YAOI? *sweatdrops* I am sooo gonna get flamed for this.... oh, and it's from Joe's POV.
> <p>"Holder of Secrets" <p>

It was midnight in the Digi-world. The air was freezing cold, the temperature so low that I could see my breath whenever I exhaled. It was times like this that I wished I had known we were going to be trapped here, so I could bring along a jacket or at least a warmer sweater.

> I glanced over at the center of the clearing, where Gabumon and Agumon had started a bonfire. The combination of blue and orange flames gave off a striking light in the snow-covered darkness. Its heat seemed to call me to it, and yet I stayed where I was, at the entrance to the clearing.
 If I had been anyone else, I would have walked over and sat by the fire, letting it warm my blood, which was beginning to chill from the cold of the falling snow. But no... I couldn't. I was the oldest. The reliable one. Tai might be the leader, but if I let my own needs get in the way of the others, I'd never forgive myself. I was the only one on the alert, the only one wary.

> Still, I couldn't help but smile. The others were lost in their own little worlds. Mimi and Sora were laughing and talking about some girlish subject. Tai and Matt were arguing over something, though they were probably only doing it for the sake of arguing. Izzy was sitting off to the side, not near yet not away from the others, typing away at his faithful laptop. And TK and Kari had fallen asleep hours ago, with our digimon gathered around them for added warmth.
 Me? I was watching, like so many times before. Watching. Keeping watch. Being responsible. Protecting them, in my own special way. If

I couldn't be the hero in battle, I could still be the victorious one in the silence of the night, where I could win by avoiding battles, rather than fighting them. There had been more than one time when the only reason we hadn't all been killed was because I was alert, keeping watch. That was what I did. Watched. Listened. Thought.

Times like this, when everyone else was either busy or asleep... they often seemed strange to me. But I enjoyed them, because they gave me time to think. About the Digi-world. About us. About... someone.

> I could feel my cheeks flushing slightly at the thought of that someone. The someone, who never even gave me a thought. Never. Except for one time... that someone told me a secret.
 It was a secret I kept carefully. I protected it the same way I protected my own secrets... with complete silence. Ordinarily, I wouldn't have thought much of a secret. If Izzy could dissect my mind, he'd find that it is much like a computer. I store information, remember things. Keep secrets. I zip them up like a file and store them away, and if someone tells me to forget them, they're gone, deleted. But this secret..

> This secret was different. It ran through my mind almost every moment of every day, even when we were running for our lives. It was because of what the secret was. It was because of the nature of the secret. It was because... I held a secret, too. A secret much the same. A secret I wouldn't tell anyone... except maybe the one who told me that secret. THE Secret. <p>

I remembered it well, the day I learned that secret. We had spent the day fleeing evil digimon, and everyone was glad when we had finally escaped and were able to rest. It was then that Tai came up to me, and said he needed to talk to me. I had followed him into the forest, wondering what was up. He seemed bothered about something.. and yet, I couldn't tell what it was. I had always been pretty good at reading people's expressions, but his face was illegible. One thing was certain, however. Whatever he needed to say was important. Up until that moment, I had ever seen Tai truly serious about anything. But now... this was different.

> "Joe," he had said when we were far enough away from the rest of the group. "I.... I think I seriously need to talk to someone."
 "And you figured I'd be the best one to listen," I stated. I wasn't at all surprised when he nodded. People tended to trust me to listen to their problems, even though I made it seem like I had so many of my own. I was trustworthy. The kind who would keep a secret.

> "Yeah... that's it." He bit his lip and looked up at me, cheeks flushed pink with.. what was it.. nervousness? I didn't know. "You won't tell anyone, will you?" His voice was small, barely above a whisper.
 "Of course I won't tell anyone," I replied, smiling slightly. "I have my secrets too.."

> His expression changed again. Relief showed through plainly enough, but it masked another.. embarrassment?
 "Thanks..," he mumbled, staring down at his sneakers. "I guess I just need to talk to someone, anyone.."

> "That's okay.... I don't mind, really." A hundred possibilities were running through my mind. What's bothering him?
 "Before I tell you this.. are you.. um.. homophobic?"

> I arched an eyebrow. "Are you...?"
 He nodded, cheeks flushing a brighter red. "Yeah. You're the first one to know."

> "I see. Well... don't worry about it. It doesn't matter to me whether you're that way or not..." I paused for a moment, thinking. My mind was racing, and I desperately tried to contain my joy. "Are

you going to tell the others?"
 "No... no, I don't think so. I don't want them to know," he replied, lifting his head. I could see now he was nervous, a flicker of fear in his eyes. "You don't tell anyone, will you? This'll just be-"
> "Our secret," I said, nodding. "I won't tell a soul.. I promise."
<p>

Ever since then, I had kept that secret. Or rather, secrets, plural. The secret he had revealed to me... and the happiness I had felt when I heard him say that. The happiness of knowing that there might be the possibility that he felt the same way about me as I did about him. I had a feeling so strong for him.. I didn't even know what to call it. Was it love? Or is love too strong a word... People throw it around as if it is nothing. Now it's come to mean so many things... but I'm sure of it. It's love.

>
 Staring into the fire for a long time had made my eyes water. I reached up to wipe my eyes, blinking away the salt. Strangely enough, I wasn't cold any more. Thinking of him, remembering the secret we shared... it always seemed to warm my heart. I could see him now, face lit up eerily by the twin-hued fire. It seemed to sparkle in his deep, warm chocolate eyes, making him seem even more beautiful than ever.

> I blinked, and shook my head. Snap out of it, Kido. Enough with the fantasizing. Still.... it didn't hurt to dream a little.
 Though I tried to avoid it, my eyes wandered back to him. His relaxed, cheerful expression, his light laugh, his hair... Gods, I thought, I wish I could touch his hair, run my fingers through it...

> My gaze swept over him, stopping at his lips. I wished I could kiss those lips. I wished I could hold him, and tell him my own secret... that I love him. <p>

I didn't know how long I stood there, watching him. It seemed like hours, and yet, mere seconds. It just seemed.. right, somehow.

> As the fire burned down low, the chatter ceased. Eventually, my friends fell asleep, until the only ones who were awake were me... and him. Now, he seemed different. It was as if the silence had changed him. He sighed and hung his head, staring at the burning coals. He seemed exhausted. Weary. But there was more to it..
 He must have felt my intent stare, because he suddenly lifted his head and looked straight at me. I quickly looked away, but it was too late. He had spotted me.

> "Joe," he said, standing up. "I need to talk to you."
 I looked at him strangely, brow furrowing as he walked toward me. It was like that time, all over again.

> "Yeah? Is something wrong?" I replied, trying to keep my voice even. Silently, I was thankful that it was night, and he couldn't see the blush in my cheeks.
 "Not really wrong.. I guess I just need your advice."

> "I'm listening."
 "Well..um.." He laughed nervously, running his fingers through that awesome hair of his. "Do you think you could keep just one more secret?"

> I nodded slowly. "Yes...."
 "Well.. I kind of..." he paused, and looked me in the eyes. "I like someone in our group. In.. you know... that way. But I.. don't know how to tell them..."

> I stared at him, mind racing. He likes someone, I thought. He can't mean.. no.. he can't possibly mean me, can he?
 "Well... I think the best way would be to just tell them straight out.." I said, feeling my face grow hot.

> "But he.. if I..." he looked away, gnawing his lip. "If I told him... he probably wouldn't believe me. He'd probably think it was a

joke. A dare or something."
 "I don't think so.. who knows, maybe he feels the same way about you."

> He laughed bitterly. "Yeah, right. You know him. Straight as an arrow."
 "Not necessarily.."

> "Oh, c'mon, Joe. Give me a break. You know Matt. You've seen how he's been flirting with Sora. Besides... I think.. he hates me.."

> I stared at him, short of breath. Did he just say what I think he said? Did he just say...
 "Tai?" I whispered, struggling to keep my eyes from watering.

> "Yeah?"
 "Did you just say... Matt?"

> He nodded, brow furrowing with confusion. "Yeah. Who did you think I was talking about?"
 I shrugged, my spirits sinking lower and lower by the second. "I don't know," I replied weakly.

> "Well... whatever..." he sighed, shaking his head. "I just don't know what to do.."
 I couldn't reply. There was only one thought running through my head. Matt. He loves Matt. Not me. Matt.

> An anger welled up inside of me, and I clenched my fists, feeling as if any second I would let loose in a fit of rage. Matt. Not me. Matt.
 "Joe? Is something wrong?"

> His voice, soft and concerned. Concerned. Concerned about me. I let out the breath I had been holding in and looked at him apologetically. "No, Tai... I'm fine."
 "Are you sure?"

> I nodded, trying to smile, just to make him free of worry. "Yeah, I'm sure."
 "All right...." he trailed off, looking as if he was about to say something, but stopped himself. "So do you have any advice?"

> I swallowed hard and tried to push aside my feelings. "Yeah," I said softly. "Just tell him. He'll understand, I'm sure of it."
 His eyes seemed to light up, twinkling with hope. "You think?"

> "Yeah," I replied, forcing a smile. "I do."
 "Thanks," he whispered, a smile spreading across his face. "Thanks a lot." He turned and walked back toward the fire, leaving me before I could get another word out.

I saw him shake Matt awake, his aura of confidence seeming to grow. They started talking in hushed voices, and I was suddenly glad I couldn't hear what they were saying. A sigh escaped my lips and I looked away.

> If I had been a different person, I would have cried. I would have cried long, and run away, bitterness in my heart. But as much as I would give to be someone else, I wasn't. I was myself. And even though he didn't love me, I didn't let it show. Let him go on loving someone else. Let him go on thinking that I'm something that I'm not. Let him break my heart a thousand times over. Though it hurt, I would never allow myself to cry for him. My emotions didn't matter. I was nothing but a silent watcher, an advisor.. a holder of secrets. I guess... that's the way it'll always be. <p>

End
file.